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July 17, 1961

1. The military build-up: "low key" or "high pressure"?

There is general agreement that the U. S. and its NATO allies should initiate a significant military build-up beginning as early as practicable. There is agreement in the Department of State that our military posture at the end of the year should be that proposed by the Defense Department.

There is also agreement in the State Department that, at least in its early stages, this build-up should occur on the "low key" referred to in Mr. Acheson's study and that it should be such as to be sustainable over a protracted period.

The psychology of mobilization is not desirable at this time. It would make allied unity more difficult to obtain and keep. More important, it could be misinterpreted by Khrushchev as bluff, or cause him to move up his own time schedule, or prompt him to dig himself even deeper into his menacing position. It would lead to a misreading of our motives in other parts of the world. It could also create premature debate at home about whether we were prudently exploring opportunities for the protection of our vital interests by means short of war.

There is agreement in the State Department that our military budget should be increased by the approximately \$4.3 billion proposed by the Defense Department and that the President should have authority to call up selected Reserve and National Guard units, if needed, in the months ahead.

There are other stand-by controls (e. g. in the economic sphere) which ought prudently to be available to the President.

The question is whether these steps can be taken on a "low key", i. e., without the declaration of a National Emergency. The problem is both legal and political. Legal aspects are under intensive study. The domestic political aspects are at least as complex. If the Congress is asked for legislation to do what the President could do by declaring a National Emergency, the question would arise as to why he does not do so. To be considered is whether the country will respond to the additional effort required without what Senator Vandenberg once called "roaring". This is another example of the dilemma between what is wise to say from a foreign policy point of view and what may have to be said in order to win the support of a large democracy for necessary action.

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In any event, we must be in touch with our Allies before major defense steps are announced.

One possibility of a solution might be a Presidential talk to the nation in which the necessary action and the "low key" atmosphere of military measures could be combined. Careful drafting and a frank explanation of the dilemma might accomplish the desired results.

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